

**Rhode Island Department of Education
School Performance Categories
Face-To-Face Meeting Agreements**

**Woonsocket Elementary Middle and High Schools
April 2nd, 22nd, and 29th, 2002**

Attending from Woonsocket on April 2nd: Edward Bouvier, Woonsocket School Comm. Chair; John Ward, Woonsocket School Comm. Chair; Miriam Goodman, Woonsocket School Department; Denise Bloom, Woonsocket Special Education Director; Anthony D'Acchioli, Ed.D., Woonsocket Superintendent; Dr. Maureen Macera, Assistant Superintendent; George Lacouture, Curriculum Director; Jonathan Gallishaw, Technology Director; Richard DiPardo, Woonsocket Teachers Guild

RIDE Staff: Mat Santos, Rick Richards, Diane Schaefer, Maria F. Lindia, Marilyn McShane Levine, Richard Latham, Judith Keeley, Elliot Krieger, Jackie Ascrizzi, Elizabeth Hyman, Jennifer Wood, Mary Ann Snider, Janet Carroll, Robert Mason

URI Staff: Michaela Keegan

Attending from Woonsocket on April 22nd: Anthony D'Acchioli, Ed.D., Woonsocket Superintendent; Catherine Clifford, Reading Department K-12; Denise Bloom, Woonsocket Special Education Director; Michael Capasso, Principal Fifth Avenue School; Norman Blanchette, Principal Harris School; Richard Pickett, Principal Social Street School; George Nasuti, Principal Coleman Elementary School; Karen Karten, ESL Program Coordinator K-12; Sylvia Natale, Principal Kendrick Avenue School and Citizens Memorial School; Margaret Tincknell, Principal Bernon Heights School; Dr. Maureen Macera, Assistant Superintendent

RIDE Staff: Maria F. Lindia, Elizabeth Hyman, Robert Mason, Marilyn McShane Levine

Attending from Woonsocket on April 29th: Richard DiPardo, Woonsocket Teachers Guild; Catherine Clifford, Reading Department K-12; Andrew Riley, Principal Woonsocket Career & Technical Center; Dr. Maureen Macera, Assistant Superintendent; George Lacouture, Curriculum Director; Karen Karten, ESL Program Coordinator K-12; Robert Vachon, Principal Woonsocket High School; Henry Hatcher, Principal Woonsocket Middle School; Karen Karten, ESL Program Coordinator K-12; Elaine Hazzard, Assistant Special Education Director

RIDE Staff: Maria F. Lindia, Elizabeth Hyman, Richard Latham (Woonsocket was scheduled for three meetings so that several issues could be addressed in detail)

RIDE WELCOME AND MEETING ORIENTATION

Deputy Commissioner Todd Flaherty welcomed the group and gave an overview of the process and objectives of the meeting including:

- Establishing of agreements on “next steps” as outlined in the School Performance Category Technical Assistance Bulletin with regard to required District/school/RIDE actions;
- Addressing district capacity for implementing activities/next steps (to be outlined in the May 1st CRP, Article 31 – Strategic Planning document for submittal to RIDE which also needs to be approved publicly in a Woonsocket School Committee meeting);
- Addressing RIDE capacity for support, if applicable; and
- Generating a meeting report, which needs to be made public at the district’s School Committee meeting.
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DISTRICT RESPONSE

Woonsocket representatives were given the opportunity to respond to the school performance categories as it applies to the schools in their district and to describe school improvement efforts for their elementary, middle, and high schools and career-technical school.

Superintendent D’Acchioli opened his remarks by referencing statistical information that had recently been published in Kids Count 2002. These statistics affirm the high mobility rate, high poverty level, high percentage of single-parent families, and high level of family illiteracy that affects student performance. 1 out of 2 are from single parent homes; 1 out of 4 are below poverty; 1 out of 5 have lead poisoning; there were 191 teen births; 219 of the parents are in jail; 18.8% of the children are abused; 1 out of 4 attend special-needs programs; 1 out of 3 finish school and there are 2 out of 3 students that do not finish school. He indicated that they have opened two brand new schools, and have negotiated an increase to 186 days for current teachers and 188 days for new teachers. This will allow teachers to access good, well-focused professional development, the most significant strategy to improve student achievement. Many teachers are also benefiting from the successful two-year mentoring program.

Superintendent D’Acchioli referenced that the school committee approved the new district strategic plan on March 24, 2002. Action plans for the strategic plan are “very serious work” and are linked with standards and benchmarks for pre-K-12 grades-All Kids. Teaching curriculum guides will be reworked.

Continuing the district review, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Maureen Macera underscored the many initiatives at the district level that will lead to a higher level of student performance. They are:

- District participation on Principles of Learning Training with the University of Pittsburgh.
- Involvement with Bill Spady to design District Strategic Plan;
- Involvement in the Balanced Reading Program;
- Plan to hire literacy and mathematics coaches for pre-K to grade 12; and
- Work with SIT Teams to identify the most critical areas to improve student performance.

She described the Woonsocket Professional Development Committee as being at a crossroads in terms of implementing performance-based programs for literacy and numeracy. The program would be the basis for providing all teachers with professional development in standards-based instruction.

A vast array of professional development activity is orchestrated across the district, including offering a masters program on site. Dr. Flaherty reminded district administrators that "focus" was critical in terms of not having too many different initiatives.

PROGRAMMATIC/INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIONS

Woonsocket representatives were given the opportunity to respond to performance designations for Bernon Heights, Citizens Memorial, Harris, Kevin K. Coleman, and Social Street Schools.

Dr. Macera indicated that the Kendrick and Pothier schools are closing at the end of the current school year. Significant attempts are underway to increase student performance on future tests. The administration, faculty, and staff have implemented several initiatives designed to improve student preparation and motivation. SALT visits and data analysis provide well-reasoned recommendations for additional reforms. Training in standards-based instruction, rubric development, examination of student work, and curriculum work are the top priorities for concentrated professional development. A before-school program is in place for remediation in mathematics and literacy.

The district intends to train each teacher on the Principles of Learning, focus on standards, improve linkages across grades and departments, and integrate writing rubrics across the curriculum. The district needs a person whose job it is to keep staff focused on the end results so that all involved in the education process can see the relevance of this kind of training. A real challenge for the districts is closing gaps for ESL and Special Needs Students. (Each school provided RIDE with a school- improvement plan)

Bernon Heights School:

Principal Margaret Tincknell indicated that the school has 588 students in grades K-5. Her faculty is currently engaged in standards-based instruction, mathematics word problems, and development of rubrics. Their professional development addresses math concepts. The before-school program is based on numeracy and literacy. They also have an after-school tutorial program. The school maintains teacher portfolios, and students maintain their individual comprehensive portfolios. More professional development activities in reading and guided reading are needed. Dr. Macera indicated that each school will have a standards coach and every teacher will be exposed to Principles of Learning. The principal addressed the performance implications for ESL and Special Needs students. She identified a lack of access to integrated, well-focused professional development for teachers who serve ESL and Special Needs students as the most significant barrier to sustain improvement in student achievement. Half of the Bernon Heights teachers have participated in SALT visits.

Citizens Memorial School:

Principal Sylvia Natale created a portrait of Citizens as a school that has improved considerably since 6 ½ years ago when she started as a principal. This school has a very complex population that is very difficult to deal with; 53% of the students are minorities. To assist parents, the school offers a family literacy program through REA. This initiative is part of the school's culture that helps parents with reading, writing, and parenting skills and teaches them how to help children with their homework. Most families in the school are families in crisis; a full-time social worker would help the situation. Professional development needs to continue through the Reading Excellence Grant. It has made a huge difference toward a positive instructional direction. Dr. Macera stated that assistant principals would be placed at the school in order to free up the principal so they will become more involved in being instructional leaders.

Kendrick Avenue School:

Principal Sylvia Natale highlighted the school's goal of supporting students in reading and mathematics. Bernon Heights, Citizens, and Kendrick Schools share activities and standards-based knowledge. The discussion turned to school improvement efforts in light of SALT reports. All the principals identified the need for:

- Establish Health Center;
- Connect standards to lessons and rubrics;
- Implement the Calgary model;
- Create a Reading Recovery Center; and
- Implement a writing program.

Coleman School:

Principal George Nasuti indicated that Coleman houses grades 3-5; 58% of the students are minorities, and 42% are Hispanic. He said that his staff and faculty are highly

motivated to bring their school to the next level, have begun standards-based instruction, and have created an 85-minute block for ELA instruction. He stated that an all-day kindergarten is much needed for Woonsocket Schools. Nasuti stated that mobility is a critical situation at Coleman. There is a need to track attendance over time and to be considered as a value-added issue. Also contributing to improved performance is the 21st Century summer program. The school faces challenges in:

- Establishing a language/writing instructional block;
- Providing writing support; and
- Acquiring reading and mathematics materials.

Dr. Macera stated that the district is looking at a software package (Cognos), which interfaces with testing data in order to help schools planning instruction based on data information.

Harris School:

Principal Norman Blanchette opened his remarks by describing his disappointment with the mathematics results because they do not capture the quality of work on mathematics that occurs in classrooms. The SIT team recommends maintaining focus on writing. Blanchette discussed the quality of instruction and delivery and remarked that the school needs to integrate instruction and assessment. Support staff provides support in the classroom (inclusion) and provide collaborative lesson development. Teachers have requested that professional development be focused on literacy, writing, and mathematics via a collaborative mode of sharing and supporting each other. He indicated that teachers also requested common planning time.

Social Street:

Principal Richard Pickette who is a new administrator to the school, indicated that there appears to be a disconnect between state expectations and classroom programs. He plans to reallocate the use of the support staff. There will be a focus on reading, writing, and mathematics problem solving. He indicated that he would use exemplars from Massachusetts state tests for practice work. There is a need for support in how to analyze student data and to rework the SI plan as per the SALT recommendations.

Woonsocket Middle School:

Principal Henry Hatcher began his presentation by indicating that eight out of sixteen targets were met. Hatcher noted that the SALT report was very favorable, and “We believe it affirms that the school is well on its way to standards-based instruction.” The middle school has two reading specialists. He indicated concern that the teachers currently teaching reading are not “reading teachers.” He stressed that the school needs more opportunities for in-depth training in reading strategies and how to apply them to the instruction of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Other efforts are under way to improve student achievement and keep the staff focused on the end results so that all involved in the education process can see the relevance of this kind of training. New emphasis is being placed on:

- Refocusing on ELA and mathematics;
- Increasing Balanced Reading opportunities;
- Acquiring reading teachers; and
- Increasing time for meaningful professional development.

George Lacouture, Federal Programs Director, indicated that plans are under way for a summer institute on mathematics and technology.

Woonsocket High School:

Principal Robert Vachon outlined the high school's successes and challenges. The school has successfully implemented a block schedule, although he raised concerns about students having enough seat time in core subjects prior to state testing. The discussion turned to school-improvement efforts to address the low scores. Initiatives include:

- Create a school-wide approach and address the issues raised in the SALT report two years ago;
- Create training for teachers to teach reading and writing strategies in class (Article 31);
- Continue to work on mathematics and problem solving;
- Move students to and beyond targets; and
- Move the targets by reducing the school's dropout rate.

Woonsocket Career and Technical Center:

Principal Andrew Riley began his presentation by describing the school's goal of supporting its students in reading in content areas and mathematics problem solving. He praised the school's small team of great teachers. Career-and-technical students take English and mathematics courses at the school. Perkins funding supports a before-and-after-school reading program that is doing very well. Riley identified the need for more professional development in mathematics instruction for teachers. A higher-level course in mathematics is a goal for the school. Dr. Flaherty noted that the phenomenon of "low expectations" coursework will cease when the Board of Regents passes a core curriculum. The school is moving to the "academy model."

RIDE/WOONSOCKET AGREEMENTS

1. Woonsocket (district) will provide RIDE with periodic updates on its progress toward improving student achievement through the fall of 2002, when the next "School Performance Categories" lists are made public.

2. Woonsocket (district) will provide to RIDE a complete listing of which schools will be open in September 2002 and which will be closed or reconfigured, based on their current program, by July 1, 2002.
3. Woonsocket (district) will continue to implement its strategic plan (revised October 2000) 2000-2003 with a particular emphasis on standards-based instruction that promotes:
 - Professional development for standards-based teaching
 - Curriculum development in English-language arts and mathematics
 - Leadership training
4. Woonsocket (elementary schools) will continue to "refocus" their professional-development activities on literacy and numeracy, including "using student work," curriculum development, and standards-based materials acquisition.
5. Woonsocket (elementary schools) will include teaching strategies that address differentiated learning needs of their children.
6. Woonsocket Schools' improvement teams will use all available data to determine how best to close student equity gaps and address academic achievement for all students.
7. Woonsocket (district) will continue to explore total implementation of a full-day kindergarten program throughout the district.
8. Woonsocket (elementary schools) will continue to promote home-school programs that contribute to parent involvement, intergenerational learning, support to families ("COZ-like"), and pre-K programs.
9. Woonsocket (district) will fully evaluate its ESL program for efficacy and comprehensiveness.
10. Woonsocket (district) will review recommendations from its latest special-education school- support visit and will implement those strategies.
11. Woonsocket Middle School will review its "transition program" for all students entering from elementary schools across the district to best determine the individual academic needs of those students. (Given the size of the school). A specific plan will be filed with the Superintendent no later than August 1, 2002.
12. The Woonsocket Middle School improvement team will fully review the available data to determine how to systematically address hitting school improvement targets. (The school "Hit" 8 of 16, but not in a manner to be considered improving - Refer to attached data analysis).
13. Woonsocket Middle School will explore further strategies to "personalize" the school for all students.

14. Woonsocket High School will review all available data to "rework" its school-improvement plan so as to address the learning needs of all students. (See attached data sheets).
15. Woonsocket High School will consider all aspects of teacher professional development in the area of standards-based education to ensure that each professional staff has a complete training experience.
16. Woonsocket High School will continue to address the issues of "personalization," "rigor," and "relevance" in terms of its key school-improvement efforts and school restructuring.
17. Woonsocket High School will identify a "common core" of expectations for graduation for all students.

POTENTIAL RIDE SUPPORT

1. RIDE will meet with Woonsocket district personnel in a series of "Progressive Support" meetings to establish regular communication on Woonsocket's progress toward improvement.
2. RIDE will determine the potential of including Woonsocket in any "pilot" student data systems' efforts in either "Round 1" or "Round 2."
3. RIDE will assist Woonsocket in identifying resources for implementation of a full-day K program.
4. RIDE will continue to offer early-literacy support to elementary schools through reading fellows and by assisting with balanced literacy approaches.